

FACTSHEET

Plant Protection & Quarantine

United States
Department of
Agriculture

Animal and
Plant Health
Inspection
Service

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Proposed Boll Weevil Cooperative Control Program in the Lower Rio Grande Valley, Texas

The U.S. Department of Agriculture's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS), in cooperation with State organizations and Texas cotton producers, is proposing a program to control the boll weevil in the counties of Brooks, Cameron, Hidalgo, Starr, Webb, and Willacy in the Lower Rio Grande Valley, Texas. This proposal is a component of the National Boll Weevil Cooperative Control Program (national program), which has adopted an incremental strategy to eradicate the boll weevil from the U.S. Cotton Belt.

In other areas of the United States, APHIS and cooperators in the national program have successfully employed integrated control methods to control the boll weevil, including chemical control, cultural control, and mechanical control. Research continues on new chemical and nonchemical methods.

Because of the proximities of cotton-production areas in Texas and Mexico, APHIS has invited Sanidad Vegetal of the Government of Mexico to cooperate by implementing a coordinated boll weevil control program. That program would control the boll weevil in adjacent areas of Mexico and protect the efficacy of the Texas eradication effort.

Environmental Analysis

In accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and its implementing regulations, APHIS and its cooperators analyzed the potential environmental effects of the national program to control the boll weevil in a programmatic document, the "National Boll Weevil Cooperative Control Program, Final Environmental Impact Statement—1991" (EIS). The EIS considered alternatives of no

action, beltwide boll weevil eradication, and beltwide boll weevil suppression. The document also provided a comprehensive analysis of the control methods that could be used beltwide and focused on the effects of chemical control methods.

In the record of decision for the national program, APHIS committed to prepare increment-specific environmental analyses as necessary. Therefore, a site-specific environmental assessment (EA), tied ("tiered") to the programmatic EIS, will be prepared for the proposed program in the Lower Rio Grande Valley. The EA will consider characteristics and issues that are special or unique to the Lower Rio Grande Valley. Under NEPA, an EA is prepared in order to determine if potential impacts will be significant or if a finding of no significant impact may be reached. APHIS also is consulting with the Department of the Interior's U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service concerning endangered and threatened species and their habitats that may be affected by proposed boll weevil control activities in Texas.

APHIS will consider the applicability of Executive Order 12114, which pertains to environmental effects of Federal actions abroad, to any cooperative boll weevil control actions that may be implemented in Mexico.

Alternatives and Issues

These control methods will be examined within the EA: cultural control (use of short-season cotton varieties and/or mandatory stalk destruction), mechanical control (mass trapping and bait tubes), sterile insect technology, and chemical control (malathion, azinphosmethyl, diflubenzuron, and methyl parathion).

The following issues regarding the proposed program have been identified by APHIS or have been raised by others and will be examined in the EA: human health impacts associated with the use of chemicals; the chemicals' effects on water quality and nontarget species; the chemicals' cumulative and synergistic effects; and special considerations with regard to sensitive areas, minority populations, and low-income populations. APHIS is sensitive to the needs of those populations and seeks to promote the objectives of Executive Order 12898 of February 11,

1994, "Federal Actions To Address Environmental Justice in Minority Populations and Low-Income Populations." APHIS will consider for analysis in the EA additional issues that may be raised by the public.

APHIS welcomes the opportunity to gain community perspectives on this and other programs and will provide appropriate opportunities for such communication.

For Further Information

To find out more about the proposed boll weevil program in the Lower Rio Grande Valley, contact

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